622 significance. The undisputed right of the chief to his position was recognized by the Mundurucú as a function of the uninterrupted occupation of the village by his family. The chief and his lineage thus gave continuity in time to the village and served as a stable element in the community, the male population of which was subject to considerable flux. The importance of the chief as a symbol of the village as a corporate entity can be derived from the attitudes of some informants who when asked why a certain village was abandoned would almost invariably reply, "The chief died" or "The chief died and there were no more old people left."

The chief's actual powers were vague. He had a position of prestige and his word was respected in decisions of a community nature, such as the choice of a new village location or the time and place of a <u>timbó</u> fishing trip, but he did not make unilateral decisions nor did he assume a role of direct authority at any time except in war, and then it was principally on the warpath and outside of the village that his authority was felt. The chief was generally an older man. Thus, he combined the two features of greatest importance in the Mundurucú prestige scale, age and eminence in warfare. If he happened to be a shaman, this would enhance his status even more.

623 There was no formal system of village council among the Mundurucú. The community decisions were discussed in the course of conversations in the men's house. The chief

623 and house leaders and other older men of the village had the greatest influence in these matters for it would have been highly important of the "children" (as anybody under the age of about 35 or 40 was called by the older men) to contest the wisdom of those who were collectively referred to as "the old men."

624 The house leader was simply the oldest man of the house and generally the husband of the oldest female, who occupied the respected position of older sister, mother, and maternal aunt to the other women of the house. He was a man who carried into the village, or at least the house, from outside and his position was the result of circumstances rather than selection or heredity. In our discussion of the household organization and economy, it became clear that the house leader did little to direct the activity of the women. His sons-in-law treated him with the respect due an older man and a father-in-law, but, since most of their activity was carried out in the larger unit of the village, he exerted little authority over them.

476 571 The leadership of collective enterprises was generally invested in the person who initiated the activity and not in the chief. If a man wanted to organize a tinhé fishing trip, he notified the other men in the village of his desire and a date and place was set. The men then went out to the garden of the man who initiated the party and helped him to pull up the tinhé roots. Direction was nominally in his hands and if many people took part, he would carry com-

12: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
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owned, though freely borrowed, but the two most costly items, the copper-toasting pan and the grater, are considered to be the property of the chief, since they were purchased through his and his extended family's labor. The large copper-toasting pan is necessary to the production of farinha, and the grater, although easily substituted by a hand grater, facilitates greatly one of the most onerous steps in the manufacturing process.

Political organization is almost nonexistent on the Cururú. The informal council of elders that operated in the context of the men's house is no longer present, and the importance of self-interest as opposed to community interest has increased greatly with the emphasis on rubber trading and the failure to perpetuate cooperative patterns. Missão Velha has a chief, José, who owes his position primarily to recognition by the mission, but who is also accorded some deference because of his age and his status as one of the earliest occupants of the village. The chief takes his status seriously and behaves with dignity. Despite his personal prestige, however, his functions are almost nil. Since collective action seldom occurs in Missão Velha, his influence is felt primarily in his extended family, which is the largest kin group in the village and includes sons-in-law as well as sons. This tendency for the chief to keep his sons nearby while attracting sons-in-law represents a continuation of the savannah pattern and of the ideal of patrilineal inheritance of the position. Although the chief's status was thereby strengthened in Missão Velha, the validity of his position was questioned by many residents. When informants were asked about the duties and responsibilities of the chief the usual answer was, "Today 'chief' is only a word. In the old days we had real chiefs who bought things for the people." Residents of Missão Velha who were not of the chief's family were